

ecoNews — Wire —

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

June 13, 2003

For immediate release

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- 2. Storm Lake bacteria levels drop dramatically**
- 3. Rules to be considered to expand Iowa loan program for water quality projects**
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LAKE GEODE STILL POSTED; BACKBONE BEACH REMAINS CLOSED

DES MOINES — Lake Geode beach in Henry County will remain posted with a swimming advisory for at least one more week and the beach at Backbone State Park in Delaware County remains closed.

The beach at Lake Geode had an E. coli bacteria reading of 600 which exceeds the one-time standard of 235 colonies per 100 milliliters. The beach has been posted for several weeks because it still exceeds the standard for a geometric mean of 126 comprised of five samples over a 30-day period. The beach will not be able to return an acceptable geometric mean for at least one week. The DNR is sampling around the Lake Geode watershed to identify potential sources of the problem.

Results for the beach at Backbone were also up this week, with an E. coli bacteria reading of 2600. The beach will remain closed while the DNR continues to investigate potential upstream sources of the problem.

Bacteria levels at Iowa's 30 other state park beaches, including Marble Beach at Spirit Lake, are within acceptable levels.

Weekly beach monitoring results are posted on the DNR's website every Friday afternoon at <http://iowadnr.com/news/beach.html>.

For more information, contact Kevin Baskins at (515) 281-8395 or Mary Skopec, 319-335-1575.

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STORM LAKE BACTERIA LEVELS DROP SIGNIFICANTLY

STORM LAKE — High levels of fecal coliform bacteria found in Storm Lake last week have dropped significantly throughout the lake.

“The good news is that bacteria levels have uniformly dropped all over the lake so people can feel safe about swimming and wading this weekend,” said Julie Sievers, an environmental specialist at the DNR Storm Lake field office.

Most of the nine samples collected June 9 had fecal coliform levels of less than 20 colonies per 100 milliliters. All but one sample were significantly under the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s water quality standard for recreational contact of 200 colonies per 100 milliliters.

The sample collected at the Lake Patrol Boat Ramp on June 9 had dropped to 310 colonies from the sample taken on June 5 which showed 3,200 colonies per 100 milliliters.

Sievers attributed the high results in the June 5 sample to heavy rainfall that occurred the morning that the samples were taken.

The DNR does not routinely sample at Storm Lake, since the beaches are not associated with state parks.

For more information, contact Julie Sievers at 712-260-0625.

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RULES TO BE CONSIDERED TO EXPAND IOWA LOAN PROGRAM FOR WATER QUALITY PROJECTS

DES MOINES — A proposal to greatly expand an existing program to improve Iowa’s water quality will be considered at the next Environmental Protection Commission meeting Monday, June 16. The meeting will be held at the Ingram Office Building, 7900 Hickman Road, Urbandale, beginning at 10 a.m.

The commission will be considering rule changes for the Water Pollution Control State Revolving Loan Fund that would removing the existing restriction making only municipalities eligible for the loans. The proposed rules would allow low interest loans to be made to a number of water pollution control projects including smaller animal feeding operations and projects that improve or protect water quality through soil conservation practices.

The state revolving loan was expanded last year to allow existing homeowners to borrow low interest money for the upgrading of inadequate septic systems. The program is approaching 100 loans having been made since it began in the summer of 2002.

“Low interest loans have already been a very successful tool for improving water quality for more than a decade,” said Jack Riessen, chief of the DNR’s water quality bureau.

“Through the loan program, more than 200 municipal sewage facilities in Iowa have received \$334 million in low interest loans and have been able to make significant improvements to their facilities in reducing water pollution. Although we still have work to do to improve wastewater treatment plants, most of our water quality challenges now involve nonpoint source pollution,” said Riessen.

Nonpoint source pollution is the pollution from rainfall or snowmelt moving over and through the ground. As the runoff moves, it picks up and carries away natural and human-made pollutants, finally depositing them into lakes, rivers and wetlands. All of the 188 waterbodies on Iowa’s list of impaired waters are negatively impacted by nonpoint source pollution.

“In fact, there isn’t a surface waterbody anywhere in the state that isn’t impacted somehow by nonpoint source pollution,” said Riessen.

If passed by the commission, there will be three public hearings at which time the public may present their views either orally or in writing. At the hearing, persons will be asked to give their names and addresses for the record and to confine their remarks to the subject of the amendments. The hearings will be held as follows:

July 30, 2003 at 7:30 p.m.	Area Education Agency, 824 Flindt Drive, Suite 105, Storm Lake
July 31, 2003 at 7:30 p.m.	Kirkwood Community College, 3 rd Floor, Iowa Hall, Room A & B, Cedar Rapids
August 4, 2003, at 1:30 p.m.	DNR Water Supply Offices Conference Room, 401 SW 7 th , Des Moines

Anyone planning to attend a public hearing and having special requirements, such as those relating to hearing or mobility impairments, should contact the Department of Natural Resources and advise of specific needs.

For more information, contact Jack Riessen at 515-281-5029 or Kevin Baskins at 515-281-8395.

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COMMON ATTIC INSULATION MAY CONTAIN ASBESTOS

DES MOINES — State and federal officials are cautioning homeowners to avoid disturbing vermiculite attic insulation due to new concerns that the materials may be contaminated with low levels of asbestos.

Marion Burnside, the state asbestos inspector with the Department of Natural Resources, said the recent federal advice comes from a joint U.S. EPA and Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry campaign to raise awareness and educate homeowners on how to avoid exposure.

“It’s a cause for concern, but not for panic,” Burnside said. “People should take simple, common sense precautions to avoid inhaling asbestos fibers. That includes not disturbing vermiculite attic insulation.” He noted that common dust masks do not provide protection against asbestos fibers.

Much of the vermiculite used to make attic insulation originated from a mine in Libby, Montana, where natural veins of asbestos in the earth contaminated the vermiculite supply. That mine closed in 1990. Currently, vermiculite is mined at three U.S. facilities and in other countries which have lower levels of asbestos contamination in the finished material.

Due to scientific uncertainties associated with existing testing techniques, there is no easy or dependable testing method to differentiate between vermiculite insulation that might have some asbestos fibers and vermiculite insulation that does not. Because home testing of vermiculite is not practical, it is best to assume that the material may contain asbestos and take appropriate precautions, according to EPA.

Federal and state officials advise homeowners to take these practical steps to minimize exposure.

- Homeowners should not disturb vermiculite attic insulation. Any disturbance has the potential to release asbestos fibers into the air.
- If homeowners must go into attic space with vermiculite insulation, they should make every effort to limit the number, duration, and activity level of those trips. Boxes or other items should not be stored in attics if retrieving them will disturb the insulation.
- Children should not be allowed to play in an attic with open areas of vermiculite insulation.
- Homeowners should never attempt to remove vermiculite insulation. If removal is necessary, hire professionals trained and certified to safely remove the material.
- If you plan to remodel or conduct renovations that would disturb the vermiculite, hire professionals trained and certified to handle asbestos to safely remove the material.

To view a brochure on how to identify and manage vermiculite insulation visit, EPA's

website: www.epa.gov/asbestos. Consumers may also order the brochure or speak to specialists by calling an EPA hotline at (800) 471-7127.

For more information, contact Brian Button at (515) 281-7832.

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MANURE SPILL IN SIOUX COUNTY

SPENCER – A structural problem may have caused a manure leak in an earthen basin at the Van Middendorp Dairy located about three miles south of Hull in Sioux County.

The leak was found and fixed on Wednesday, but DNR investigators were back on the site Thursday to inspect the repairs and to look for fish kills.

The DNR estimates that between 5,000 and 10,000 gallons of manure leaked through a wall in the basin. Some of the manure pooled below the basin and some reached an unnamed tributary of the West Branch of the Floyd River.

Elevated levels of ammonia were found in the stream. Although there is no evidence of a fish kill, DNR investigators are not sure that fish are normally present in the stream due to somewhat high background levels of ammonia.

The earthen basin was constructed last fall after the dairy obtained a construction permit from the DNR.

The public water supplies at Council Bluffs and Omaha have been notified.

For more information, contact Cindy Martens, environmental specialist at the Spencer DNR field office, at 712-262-4177.

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EPC COMMISSIONERS MEETING ON JUNE 16

DES MOINES -- The regular EPC meeting will be held at 10 a.m., June 16, at the DNR office, 7900 Hickman Road in Urbandale. Public participation is scheduled for 10:30 a.m. The meeting is open to the public.

The complete agenda is as follows:

- Approval of Agenda
- Approval of Minutes
- Director's Remarks
- Agreement with the Iowa Waste Reduction Center
- Interagency Agreement for the Polk County Air Quality Division Program

- Interagency Agreement for the Linn County Air Quality Program
- Amendment to Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Iowa Department of Economic Development
- SFY 2004 DNR/UHL Air Quality Bureau Support Contract
- Notice of Intended Action - Chapter 22, Controlling Pollution (Air Construction Permitting Exemption for Small Units)
- Notice of Intended Action - Chapter 23, Emission Standards for Contaminants (Open burning rule revisions including controlled burning of a demolished building)
- Petition for Rulemaking by Agribusiness Association of Iowa, et. al.
- Contract - St. Mary's University, GeoSpatial Services, Winona MN - Update of the National Wetlands Inventory for Iowa (Pilot Project)
- Contract - University Hygienic Laboratory for Analytical Services
- Amendment to 2003 Environmental Monitoring and Laboratory Services Agreement with the University of Iowa - Environmental Services Division and Director's Office
- Contract -- Toxic Cleanup Day Contract Amendment
- Contract -- The Energy Group - FY2004 Delivery Consultant for the Iowa Energy Bank Program
- Proposed Rule -- Amend IAC Chapter 567-117 "Waste Tire Management"
- Rulemaking Petition - Stormwater Program Fees
- Notice of Intended Action - Chapter 90 -- Scope of Title - Definitions - Forms; Chapter 91 -- Criteria for Rating and Ranking Projects for the Water Pollution Control State Revolving Fund; Chapter 92 -- State Revolving Fund Loans for Wastewater Treatment and Water Pollution Control; and Chapter 93 --- Onsite Wastewater Treatment System Assistance Program
- Monthly Reports
- General Discussion

The members of the commission are Kathryn Murphy, Chair, LeMars; Terrance Townsend, Newton; Lisa Davis-Cook, West Des Moines; Darrell Hanson, Manchester; Lori Glanzman, Mt. Pleasant; Jerry Peckum, Jefferson; Heidi Vittetoe, Washington; Francis Thicke, Fairfield; and Donna Buell, Spirit Lake. The director of the DNR is Jeff Vonk.

For more information, contact Karen Grimes, at (515) 281-5135.

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DNR TO EXHIBIT AT IOWA CATTLEMEN'S CONFERENCE

DES MOINES – The DNR will feature keys to success at the Iowa Cattlemen's summer conference and trade show, June 26 and 27 at the Scheman Building in Ames.

“We welcome this opportunity to talk to producers and answer their questions about the DNR’s programs or state regulations,” said Ken Hessenius, supervisor of the DNR Spencer field office.

Many producers are taking the right steps to follow state environmental regulations, while others need that key to the most economically feasible way to comply, Hessenius said.

Hessenius has been visiting registered open feedlots to determine how much risk, if any, the open feedlots pose to the environment. Those lots with a higher risk had a higher eligibility ranking to qualify for federal cost-share funds this year, but they must also act more quickly to comply with state regulations.

“I urge you to stop by the booth and find out what we can do to help you,” Hessenius said.

For more information, contact Ken Hessenius, supervisor of the Spencer DNR field office, at 712-262-4177, or Karen Grimes at 515-281-5135.

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